

622 sends one of his assistants to invite the elders and
627 summons the defendant. If the problem is important,
of this kind include delimitation of the boundaries of
fields—a kind of arbitration case often made necessary
by contracts drafted ambiguously by incapable men.
Cases of dividing a paternal inheritance are often labori-
ous and consume many days. The whole community is
[681] interested in such cases. In personal quarrels, disputes,
and fights the offending party may be flogged with up
to one hundred stripes. If the complainant has been
wounded, the defendant is condemned, in addition, to
defray the expenses for the doctor and for medicine and
to pay indemnity for a fixed number of days of re-
cuperation.

• 685 Stealing seems to be an ineradicable evil among the
Monguors, and stealing of animals is the worst of all.
The Monguors still seem to have the old attitude to-
ward thieving and the stealing of animals, although
thieves are severely punished. Among the neighboring
nomads, when a man is caught red-handed stealing ani-
mals, he is taken to a lonely spot, the tendons of his
ankle joints are cut, and he is left, crippled, to die on
the spot. The nomads show no pity for cattle thieves.
The Monguors do not punish as cruelly and do not in-
flict capital punishment, but the thief has his hands
bound behind his back and is then hung by the thumbs,
until he loses consciousness. Water is then poured on
his head. When he recovers consciousness, the same
sport is repeated two or three times. He is then flogged
with up to five hundred stripes, or even more. If a thief
is caught the second time, he is sent to the T'u-ssu's
prison, and when he emerges from jail, he is a wreck of
his former self—provided he escapes at all, by bribing
the guards.

People who steal sheaves from the field at harvest time
are flogged with up to fifty or one hundred stripes and
are led through the village, the sheaves on their back,
[865] crying the whole way long that they are guilty. Boys
accused by their parents of disobedience are flogged in
the same way, after having been forced to apologize to
their parents.

684 In cases of adultery the guilty pair, if caught in
flagrante delicto, are flogged with up to one hundred
stripes or more. The woman is beaten on her bare back
with rawhide lash, the man on his bare buttocks and
thighs. Apologies are made to the injured husband.
A sheep or pig is brought to his home. Fire crackers
are set off. The guilty pair ask a guarantor to speak
for their proper conduct in the future. An official state-
ment is written attesting the fact of adultery and the
supplication for pardon. The two guilty persons place
their right thumbs on an inked pad and then make an
impression with the thumb on the statement. They are
then led through the village, two drums beating before
them, while they confess their guilt.

Once in a while a young woman runs away from her

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608 who has eaten the pig of the Dalai Lama"; or "If I
782 break my oath, may I be thrown into the deepest of the
eighteen Hells"; or "May I be punished through nine
reincarnations"; or "If I am false to my oath, may I be
killed"; or "May I have my eyes burned out." The
oaths, both positive and negative, are followed by the
declaration "Now we are as brothers who have suckled
the milk of the same mother."

The oaths are taken very seriously. There is great
fear of the retribution for perjury. There is a saying
that "Poison kills only the man who drinks it but per-
jury brings the death of his whole family."

608 Sworn brothers call on each other and present gifts at
New Year, at the Spring Festival of the Fifth Moon,
and at the Autumn Festival, or "Feast of the Dead" on
the fifteenth of the Eighth Moon. They invite each other
to marriages and funerals like members of the family.
In case of clan blood feud, a sworn brother must give
help and support as if he were a blood brother. A case
of this kind is recorded among the Mongols of the late
twelfth century. The father of Chingis was the sworn
brother of Wang Khan of the Keraites. After the death
of his father and after his wife had been stolen from him
by the Merkits, Chingis and his brother went to Wang
Khan and presented him with the sable gown that was
part of the dowry of Chingis' wife and begged for his
support, and Wang Khan declared war on the Merkits.²⁸

In some families, the sons of sworn brothers often
swear the same oath, and it is common for sworn brothers
to give their children to each other in marriage.
Often the ties between sworn brothers are more intense
and personal than those of blood brothers.

608 Among the variations of the sworn brother relation-
685 ship, a rich man not engaged in crime himself may be-
come a sworn brother with known thieves as a protec-
tion against being robbed by them. An influential man
will in fact rarely refuse the oath of brotherhood if it is
proposed to him by a noted thief. In carrying out his
side of the relationship the "respectable" sworn brother
will help the thief when he is short of money and use
his influence to get him off if he has been caught. Most
of the thieves and robbers in the Monguor country are
sworn brothers, linked in one group, and when one of
them takes the oath with a rich man he informs the
others and none of them will do the rich man harm.

608 It is also true that honest people take the oath together
in order either to strengthen already friendly relations,
or to organize themselves as a group for mutual protec-
tion. In one case of my own knowledge a poor Mon-
guor swore the oath with a rich man who helped him get
his affairs on a sound footing. The poor man was hon-
est and loyal and in time he became a man of substance.
The relations between these two were as intimate as if
they had been real brothers.

608 It is common for a rich Monguor to become the sworn
648 brother of the chief of a Tibetan tribe, as a means of se-

²⁸ Vladimirtsov, *The life of Chingis-khan*, as cited, 27.

with a burning ram's horn. He was carried outside the monastery wall by lamas. Ashes were spread all the way along in order to prevent his "spirit" from finding the way back to harm the lamasery. A large group of lamas followed. He was thrown on the ground, stripped of all his garments, amid the shouts of the lamas and the long blare of trumpets, and the group returned to the monastery without looking back. A round mark is burned on thieves. It is impossible for those so marked to enter any monastery. [695] ●

At the time of the festival at Erh-ku-lung in 1912, three young lamas molested a young lady, causing her death. They fled the same night. The whole village of Too-long accused the monastery at Hsining, which was unable to trace the murderers and had to pay an indemnity of 3,000 taels, after spending far more at court. The whole country was bursting with righteous indignation. It was a tremendous loss of face for the lamasery. [627] ●

Lamas not only lack the vow of obedience, but also the vow of poverty. It has been explained how lamas retain their own wealth and the means they use for increasing it.²⁷ Among the lamas are rich individuals enjoying a happy life, possessing a beautiful courtyard, clothed with silk and brocade, riding the finest horses and mules of the country, served by as many lamas as they wish, and there are poor individuals who have trouble making both ends meet—ill fed, ill clothed, working the whole day. Nobody takes care of them because wealth is a personal matter, and no vow of poverty exists. It has been explained how the lack of the vow of poverty is responsible in a large part for the loss of spirit in the monastic life, and how from this lack originate most of the vices encountered among the lamas and the ruination of monasteries. [684] ●

Lamas lack the vow of chastity; for chastity reaches farther than celibacy. The Buddhists know this very well and the texts prove it.²⁸ [681] ●

The reform of Tsong-khapa, the founder of the Yellow Sect, aimed at return to the traditional monastic life, based on celibacy and serious study. The sense of the necessity of celibacy still seems to prevail among the Monguor lamas. This assumption seems evidenced by the facts that the communities of lamas bring suit at Chinese courts against even supreme chiefs of lamaseries, and intendants who betray their vows, as was the case with the Living Buddhas Sumpa, Lu-chia, and Min-chu-erh, and even with Li, the intendant of the T'u-kuan Hutukhtu. It was the same with the Living Buddha Seerting who was caught red-handed by the [185] ●

²⁷ The wealth possessed by a lama, his courtyard, etc. are inherited by his apprentice; in case he dies without having an apprentice, his wealth is sold by the intendency; prayers are said by the lamas and alms given to them. If a lama who is proprietor of a courtyard marries, his courtyard is taken by the intendency.

²⁸ L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Morale bouddhique*, 79, Paris, Librairie Nationale, 1927.

Buddhas. The special *swork'a* or prayer honoring his deity is read by the lamas, and the Kurtain is proclaimed to be a genuinely possessed man. Then he is ordered to memorize his *swork'a* and to recite it before each performance, it being an invitation to his deity to descend into him. 756 757

Then follow the usual recommendations given to all Kurtains about continence on the day of a performance, not to act when his wife is giving birth and at mourning time, not to indulge in wine, to keep his weapons (sword, whip, and dagger) in a decent place and not to use them for other purposes; to give a performance at the monastery at the annual pageant time and in the families where his deity is specially honored, and always stress is put on the obligation to be loyal, honest, and dependable, so as not to cast a blight on the institution. Every time I heard this last recommendation, I remembered what the Monguors had said so many times, that among the Kurtains more dubious fellows are encountered than among the shamans, and for that reason the shamans are invited more by them than the Kurtains. They always added the story of the famous Kurtain of Toolong, which was seared in their mind. It seems really typical and sheds an unfavorable light on the institution. [844]

Many years ago, the Kurtain of Toolong used to predict whether there would be outbreaks of arson in autumn when the crops were heaped upon the threshing floor. In this way he earned a pretty good living, because the crops of the people who had invited him for the performance of his rites were preserved and those of the incredulous people were burned at night. The whole country was really disturbed. However, suspicions arose and the arsonist was taken redhanded one night. He turned out to be the old father of the Kurtain. The chief and the elders of the village hung the old man by his thumbs from a tree and he received a well-deserved lashing to make him reveal the instigator of the arson. Reeling with dizziness and pain, welts and bruises all over his body, the father accused his son, and the Kurtain was hung up and tortured. The infuriated villagers came within a hair of killing him. His mandate of disciple of the spirit was gone forever. Such events are very prejudicial to the Kurtains. They cast a blemish on their group and are commented on all over the country for years, and so the saying goes that there are few good genuine Kurtains, and for that reason all have to be tested.² 756 685

Some of the Kurtains not only upset the villagers once in a while, but even land the monasteries in serious trouble. A fact well known in the country runs, that on the fifteenth of the first moon in 1914, the lamas of the important lamasery of Seerkok invited their Kurtain, possessed by the deity Kortong, to the ceremony carried out in honor of the deity, with great pomp and display. [627]

² DeGroot, *op. cit.*, 1238, notes a similar case of a *Wu* arsonist. 756 579

old Living Buddha of Erh-ku-lung. Each claimed to be the proprietor of a small mountain. The Living Buddha lost his suit and the limping Tjaar tseen became the most celebrated man in the country. The Buddha invited three black shamans to bewitch the limping Tjaar tseen, and accused him again. He lost the second lawsuit also. Raging, the Buddha invited three black shamans to cast more efficacious spells. The chief of the village did not care any more, and the villagers graze their herds on the mountain to the present day. This fact is interesting for us because a Living Buddha, on two occasions, invited black shamans. 754

Hu, a rich Monguor, compelled a poor Monguor to sell to him his beautiful and willing young wife. [582] The poor Monguor, using his last resource, invited a black shaman to bewitch his wife. The black shaman prepared skulls of a dog and of a fox, and a horn of a black goat. Inside each he enclosed three slips of paper on which he had designed cabalistic signs with dog blood around the name of the wife. The three items were buried at night under the entrance door of the courtyard of Hu, with the mouth of the skulls facing his living room. The young wife became sick. Shamans were invited to discover the cause of the illness and to neutralize the evil influences, but to no avail. The wife died and the shaman, it was said, was powerless against a punishment of Heaven and the spirits. But there was no peace in the courtyard; at night, noises disturbed the rest. Black shamans were invited for three days and they found the skulls. The poor man was accused before the T'u-ssu, but the T'u-ssu did not pay any attention because the behavior of the rich Monguor was supposed to have been unjust. It is the usual trick of the black shamans to bury magical things under the lintels of doors or in cemeteries.

In countries where there are no newspapers, such tales are spread like prairie fires, by peddlers, and 703
commented on and believed, especially when outstanding persons are involved. They create the trend of mind of the people and make them fear so much the black shamans living south of the Hsining River, who are said to use beads made from human bones, to blow a trumpet made from the bone of a young woman who committed suicide, to wear a girdle made from the skin of such a woman, to braid into the enormous pigtail, coiled around the head, the hair of such a woman, and to use drums made from skulls of young girls. The most terrifying tales are told about them and they are believed by the people. 754

RITES CONCERNING THE GUARDIAN SPIRITS OF THE WEALTH OF THE FAMILY

According to the Monguors, persons who commit injustices are pursued by the guardian spirit of the wealth of the victim of the injustice, who causes them

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to suffer from all kinds of mischief and misfortune.¹⁷⁷⁷
 Persons guilty of injustices have the problem of finding ⁶⁸⁵
 a means of appeasing that spirit and of remaining in ⁵⁵⁶
 possession of the stolen wealth by faking restitution.
 Lamas of both sects are conversant with the practice.
 Lamas of the Yellow Sect perform the rite for those of
 the Red Sect, and *vice versa*; but never for a lama of the
 same sect.

Five lamas enact the rite, which lasts for seven days.⁷⁹²
 The first day, helped by a carpenter, they build a ⁶⁸⁵
 rudimentary sedan chair with thin lathes, and paste on ⁷⁸²
 it plenty of colored paper. Four flags are set up, one ⁵⁵⁶
 on each of the four corners. In the sedan chair are
 deposited five small paper bags, each containing a
 handful of five kinds of grain, five kinds of thread of
 the five sacred colors, some packets of wool, some rolls,
 white and red sugar, raisins, dried apricots, some meat
 and some new garments of the very cheapest kind.
 The sedan chair is placed in the center of the living
 room. In front of it, in the courtyard, an enormous
 bull head made of paper and having two terrifying horns
 painted red is put in a large caldron. A lamp is lit
 before the caldron. A piece of black cloth about two
 feet wide is stretched in a square around the caldron
 and sedan chair and is supposed to represent the wall
 of a city. An opening is left where the cloth meets and
 is called the city gate. Outside the city walls are planted
 painted spears and swords, one next to the other. In
 front of the city gate a stake is planted on which
 cabalistic designs are written with red ink. The stake
 is supposed to be the seat of the spirit who is the
 avenger of injustices.

The lamas, twice every day, sit in front of the stake,
 ringing bells, rattling drums, manipulating the ritual
 daggers, and reciting texts. Absorbed in meditation,
 they stare for a long time at the stake. Finally, they
 start imploring the spirit not to release its avenging
 bolts, inviting it to take a look at the magnificent sedan
 chair upholstered with satin and brocade and adorned

¹¹ The notion of a guardian spirit of the family wealth among
 the Mongols seems to be general and old. "This housegod
 was commonly called, 'the very old grandmother.'" Kovalevski,
Dictionnaire mongol-russe-français, 215b, Kazan, 1844, gives a
 description of this deity which accords well with that of Yüan
 times: "gardien de la maison, de la famille et tous les biens.
 Chez les shamans on le fait des peaux de moutons et de dif-
 férents torchons de toile." See also Heissig, A Mongolian
 source to the Lamaist suppression of shamanism in the 17th
 century, *op. cit.*, 511. According to Hoffman, *op. cit.*, 174,
 the fear of a spirit avenging injustices caused to families is
 familiar to the Tibetans too. The old Bön religion in Tibet
 honored a protector-spirit of the wealth of the individual, called
Nor-Lha. Uno Harva, *Die religiösen Vorstellungen der Alt-
 tatischen Völker*, 276, 1938. Many Turkish tribes believe each
 man has a special protector spirit, from the time of his birth,
 who protects him and his cattle. In the tents is encountered
 an image of this spirit and daily an offering is made for it.
 J. F. Rock, The Na-khi naga cult and related ceremonies,
Serie Orientale, Roma, IV, Part I, 1952, The Naga spirits guard
 grains and riches. There are Naga spirits of cultivated fields,
 of villages, of the ground upon which houses are built, etc.

with silk flags, to look at the hundreds of measures of grain put into the chair, the hundreds of pounds of sugar and raisins, the hundreds of rich garments, and the herd of sheep which follows the chair (for the few pieces of meat are called a "herd of sheep"), and so on, for the other items. They implore it to look at the unusual prodigality of the customer, who is a fervent adherent of the faith. After the parody is played, the lamas have a good time visiting the neighbors. On the seventh day, at night, all the neighbors help escort the troublesome spirit outside the village, forming an imposing cortege with banners flying and drums, horns, and some rifles, and carrying the sedan chair, the caldron and bull head, the spears and swords. The lamas blow the trumpets made from a human femur. The bull head, spears, and swords are buried in a deep hole; a big fire is lit and the pit is filled, at full speed, flush with the ground. The stake is thrust into it; the whole group howls and curses the avenger, rifles are fired, trumpets blown, and the lamas return. The sedan chair is emptied by the neighbors. Restitution is thus made, the avenging spirit is appeased and thrust into the hole, and the thief remains possessor of his thievery.

A rich man, Lo san lao, who lived in Ha-la-chih Valley, had succeeded in bringing to his home the fine young lady of the poor Monguor Li sse of Naring Valley. Calamities then troubled his family, and he invited Yellow lamas to perform the rite. They placed in the sedan chair a fine paper lady. The rite of the caldron and bull head was carried out, and the avenging spirit was thrust into the hole. Restitution was thus made by means of a paper lady, but he remained the possessor of the real one.

After many years this rite as performed by Red lamas, invited by the famous Sumpa Hutukhtu in order to compensate for the injustices perpetrated by his intendants, is still talked about in the country. The splendid sedan chair was on this occasion lavishly filled with precious items. A beautiful horse which followed the cortege was abandoned for the neighbors. After the bull head had been buried and the avenging spirit thrust into the hole, hundreds of people had tried to capture the horse.

The claims of justice are deeply embedded in the consciousness of the people, and the necessity of restitution for injustices is always advocated by the lamas, although the magical rite of restitution seems to be a mockery of its real intent. Justice seems to rank first among the virtues.

In connection with this peculiar mentality concerning the spirit who is the avenger of injustices is to be noted the cult of the Sturlong spirit. This spirit is supposed to guard the wealth of the family with ruthless severity. It does not allow anything of value belonging to the family which honors it to be taken away. It is honored as a family deity, mostly among the Monguors of the

/The Monguors/

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The village effectively governs itself, punishing offenders, righting wrongs and maintaining peace. Great stress is placed upon faithful adherence to the old customs, and one of the important duties of the village chief is to see that they are observed. In any discussion about village affairs, the supreme argument is that of old customs. To neglect or forget the customs of the ancestors would undermine the stability and prosperity of the clan. (See Social Structure.) This conviction is dinned into the ears of the young on every possible occasion. A good test of a prospective village chief or T'u-ssu is his firm and unshakable faith in the strict observance of clan tradition.

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During the administration of the Chinese Nationalists, the village elders had a real struggle to save their old customs and traditions. Social concepts had been undermined gradually by the enrollment of Chinese into Mongour clans, and in villages where Chinese had become elders, Chinese concepts had seeped in and were creating repercussions among the young Mongours.

e. Stealing and gambling

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Stealing is considered an unforgiveable sin, and stealing animals is the worst possible form of stealing. All thieves are punished severely; cattle thieves are shown no mercy.

Gambling is not permitted. Any offender must pay a fine, which is used for the upkeep of the temples or the expenses of the spring and autumn religious festivals.

f. Widowhood and remarriage

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A widow is allowed to remarry, and to make her own decision about whether or whom to marry. If she consents to remarry, she will exchange girdles with her prospective second husband in token of her willingness. If she wishes to marry one man and is being compelled to marry another, she can notify the first of the time of her departure to the home of the second, and the desired mate may kidnap her on the way. If a widow is kidnapped against her will, however, the matter is taken to the chief and the village elders.

g. Discipline of children

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Children are trained early in life. They attend the meetings at which crimes are discussed and punishment meted out, and learn first hand that undesirable behavior brings undesirable consequences. They are never shielded from the realities and miseries of life, and as a result they are more sophisticated in their social knowledge than youngsters in other countries.

h. Etiquette

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According to custom, only the oldest generation may be seated during meals. When the family is entertaining, the family head presides at the meal. His wife does not sit down unless the guests invite her to do so. During family meals, both grandparents sit on the k'ang, and the elder son may sit on the edge